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## WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

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THE problem of the supernatural continues to be the pressing theological problem of our day. It goes deeper than most of the other problems before us, and their solution to a very large extent depends for validity on its solution. But the problem is a baffling one, and, it must be admitted, keeps at arm's length the great majority of investigators.

One great difficulty has always been the lack of a clear definition of the supernatural. There have been many definitions constructed; but the arguments that proceed under the one definition often cannot proceed under the others. They frequently represent such entirely different points of view that discussion becomes idle or impossible. And yet, during the last two centuries, there has been a marked progress in this definition of the supernatural. The result is that today we are in a much better position than ever before to debate the well-worn theme.

The purpose of this article is simply to attempt a definition. The discussion of the reality of the supernatural, whether from a scientific or philosophical point of view, cannot proceed without such a definition or agreement, and, plainly, many a difficulty and a debate would have had no existence, if there had been a more critical use of terms. Perhaps the most valuable contribution to the solution of the problem in our day of confusion would be a thoroughly workable conception of the supernatural.

In attempting such a definition, we cannot, of course, begin at the beginning of knowledge. Accordingly the following assumptions will be made throughout the article: (1) We will assume the truth of Christian theism. God is a spirit, immanent in all things, transcending all things, the Creator, Ruler, and Redeemer of the universe. (2) The doctrine of evolution will be accepted as universally valid, and therefore as the mode of creation in all orders of finite being. Nothing finite will be removed from its

domain. Accordingly, (3) the reign of law will be regarded as absolute. No exception will be allowed, however ignorant we may be of many of the laws of the universe. These three assumptions we will take as commonplaces, with which all our other theological ideas must be in congruity.

Now, how shall we obtain the sought-for definition of the supernatural? Three methods offer themselves; viz., etymology, induction, and speculation. We will adopt them in this order.

I. The first method will not detain us long. Etymology can help us little to an understanding of the problem, though its contribution is valuable.

The older word "miraculous" simply means the marvelous or wonderful. This idea is the first that enters into our conception of the supernatural. Many would like to limit the meaning of the latter to this simplest of all its elements. But such a limitation is impossible until the other definitions are disproved.

The later term "supernatural" is more helpful in its significance, though it is as ambiguous as the older term is vague. It is a relative term, and describes something by contrast with the "natural." But what is the "natural"? Many meanings have been attached to it from the earlier use of it to describe all reality, to the latter use of it to denote only the physical order of being. The restriction of its use to denote the physical order is, however, modern; and when the term "supernatural" came into use, the term "natural" certainly covered both the physical and the moral orders. The Christian revelation was called supernatural in distinction from both these orders, which constituted the "nature" of an older day. Here, then, is a difficulty. We commonly use the term "natural" as the equivalent of the physical or mechanical; whereas the term "supernatural" preserves an older usage. But, once stated, the difficulty should never lead to confusion.

There is another ambiguity in the historical usage of the word, which sometimes confuses. It is found in the force of the prefix. What does it mean to be "above" or "beyond" nature? The supernatural transcends the natural, but in what sense? There have been two interpretations of its meaning: (1) The supernatural is transcendent in the sense that truth transcends

true words or justice transcends just acts; or, better still, as God transcends the universe in which he is also immanent. In other words, the supernatural does not denote a part of experience distinct from the physical and the moral orders, but the reality manifested in and constituting the mechanical and moral orders, though not perfectly revealed in their progressive phenomena. A large and influential school of thinkers would interpret the supernatural in this philosophical sense of the transcendent.<sup>2</sup>

(2) But there is another understanding of this transcendence of the supernatural, which has the distinction of being the most widely accepted usage of the term. The supernatural is a part of our experience, which transcends both the physical and moral orders, in the sense that it does not conform to their laws, but subordinates these orders to higher ends. The transcendence of the supernatural describes a relation between two parts of experience, not the relation of experience as a whole to the ultimate principle of reality. The supernatural is the miraculous, a series of experienced facts, inexplicable by the laws of nature and morality. This has been by far the most widely accepted usage of the term, and must in fairness be adopted until disproved.

This brief etymological inquiry, therefore, gives only a negative result. We learn the predominant usage of the term to be a description of alleged facts as transcending physical and moral orders of being, and inexplicable by their laws and forces. What the supernatural positively is remains yet to be seen.

II. We come now to our second method of definition, viz., by induction from the facts alleged to be supernatural. The belief in the supernatural has been practically universal throughout human history; and the facts are numberless which are thus designated. We can observe, compare, and analyze these facts, like any other facts of experience, after an approved scientific manner.

We must, however, limit ourselves to a select number; and the miracles of the New Testament are obviously the most typical and credible. Let us accept them as the facts to be defined.

<sup>2</sup> This is also the prevalent conception of the supernatural in much of our literature. The "Natural Supernaturalism" of Carlyle is typical.

In the New Testament we find two distinct series of facts referred to as supernatural; viz., a series of physical events, *e.g.*, making water wine, healing the sick, multiplying loaves and fishes, raising the dead; and a series of moral events, *e.g.*, regeneration, sanctification, prophecy. Whatever the supernatural may be, it apparently transcends both the natural and moral orders of being; and we have these two distinct classes of miracles. There is suggestion in this distinction and unity of the two classes.

There is plainly little room for an inductive study of these miraculous events, since they are far distant in time, and we learn of them only through the report of others whose psychological characters are more or less unfamiliar to us. But if we are looking at distant events through others' eyes, we can at least bring their observations to the test of universal experience.

Let us look first at the physical miracles; and, as a fair example, we will take Jesus' healing of the leper (Mark 1:40-45), a miracle circumstantially recorded by all the synoptists. What do we find in it that is common to them all? The facts can be very easily stated. (1) A sudden physical change, apparently instantaneous—viz., cleansing from leprosy. (2) The change is without any physical cause. From the story, we must understand the leprous condition to remain unchanged up to the moment of healing; and no physical remedy was used. (3) The change follows the volition of Jesus, who by word and touch declared his purpose to heal. "I will, be thou clean." (4) On other occasions Jesus ascribes this power to work miracles to God, given to him by God in answer to prayer (Matt. 12:28; John 11:41, 42; Matt. 28:18). (5) The healing is a work of mercy, done in compassion. A review of the miracles recorded in the New Testament would probably discover these features common to them all.

Let us now look at the moral miracles referred to in the New Testament. There is, unfortunately, more difficulty in determining the facts involved, inasmuch as a moral change is a much more complicated affair than a physical one, and less open to observation than it. But we have the great advantage of the

full religious experience of historical Christianity to aid us; and the difficulty should not baffle us. Let us take Paul's conversion as our example. We will neglect the physical miracles connected with it, and seek the features which it has in common with all other sudden conversions. What are these? (1) A radical change of character, viz., in disposition and purpose of life. (2) The change is antagonistic to previous conduct, and cannot be the moral expression of it. (3) It follows the surrender of a man's life to God in a penitent faith. (4) This faith is a reliance upon God instead of upon oneself for salvation. (5) This salvation is self-realization through self-abnegation. These features will probably be found true of all Christian conversions.

Now, the parallelism between the physical and the moral miracles is obvious; and the features common to them may be easily gathered. Let us arrange them thus: (1) On the assumption of theism, a miracle is a divine act, as truly as any change in providence. (2) It is an act of grace, redemptive in its character. The redemptive character of all miracles, physical and moral, is finely illustrated by Jesus' words in healing one sick of the palsy (Mark 2: 10, 11). (3) Its operation transcends the laws of nature and morality, *i. e.*, does not conform to them. (4) It does not involve the suspension or violation of these laws, but only their subordination to the purpose of grace. (5) It is conditioned by the religious faith of the man who acts as the agent or is the subject of the change.

These are the observations which the Christian church has repeatedly passed upon the miracles reported in the New Testament; and they are acceptable to all who are willing to accept the reports for the sake of definition. They tell us two important things, viz., what the supernatural is, and what its transcendence means. The supernatural is a divine work of grace, for the redemption of the world from evil and the realization of its eternal destiny. This is its positive meaning. Again, its transcendence of natural and moral laws means, not simply that it does not conform to them, but also that grace wields dominion over them, and subordinates them to its redemptive purpose. The laws of

nature and morality are unceasingly operative, but they are subject to the saving purposes of the Eternal Love. These are the important results reached by the method of induction; and by this method, on the report of others, we cannot perhaps easily go farther. The interpretation of these results has now become the important matter; and for that we must adopt the method of speculation.

III. The resort to speculation for the sake of a definition is forced upon us by the startling character of our results by induction. They do not seem to fit into any of our theories of the universe. Hence we are compelled to speculate as to their meaning. Speculation is the attempt to see the particular in the light of the universal, or judge of a part by its relation to the whole. All speculation involves some theory of the universe; and the speculative definition of the supernatural will vary with the theory of the universe accepted. Is there, then, any theory of the universe that gives the supernatural an intelligible place in it?

In a brief review of the leading historical definitions, we must necessarily limit ourselves to the most typical ones—those which reflect the great movements of modern philosophy. We may say, therefore, that there have been three great stages in the progress of modern definitions; and we will seek our definition by following the historical order.

1. The first stage may be called the *dogmatic*. It is the type of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The natural and moral orders constitute the whole universe of God's creation, a work which was complete in the beginning. The miraculous is a divine interposition or intervention for the redemption of the world from the evil which has entered it by man's free will. Each miracle is an overruling of the course of nature or morality, in the violence of love; and since it does not conform to the laws of nature and morality, it must be due to God's direct volition or immediate agency. Let us try to analyze this familiar conception. (1) We have the deistic conception of creation. (2) The miraculous is therefore an intervention or interposition in the finished order of creation. (3) The transcendence of the

spiritual must be due to the direct volition of God, in distinction from his activity through the medium of second causes.

The difficulties of such a conception of the supernatural are apparent. First of all, it makes God use his omnipotence in an arbitrary way, even though in love, that he may save the universe of his creation. It makes the miracles appear as isolated, scattered events, external additions rather than constituent elements of the world, subject to no law but the impulse of love. Then, further, how can God act upon any created object except through its conditions, since there is no such object except so far as it is constituted by these conditions? If God cannot act upon any created object except through its conditions, his action is as completely conditioned in a miracle as in any act of providence. In the miracle's transcendence of natural and moral law, therefore, there must be either an arbitrary suspension or violation of the laws of nature and morality,<sup>2</sup> or there are other unknown natural and moral laws which are observed in this sovereignty of grace. On the dogmatic theory of the universe, we are shut up to one or other of these alternatives. But if we assume the absolute reign of law, we must reject the first and accept the second, or deny the reality of miracles altogether.

2. We accordingly reach what may be called the *skeptical* stage in the progress of definition. It is the type which has been largely developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century; and its view of the supernatural increasingly prevails.

The dogmatic view, resting upon its theological theory of revelation, held fast by the transcendence of the supernatural over all nature and morality, but could not explain the apparent arbitrariness of a miracle, except by referring it to the immediate agency of God or his direct volition, *i. e.*, action without the medium of second causes. The scientific temper of the nineteenth century, however, could not overlook the numberless conditions of every creature in the universe, without which there can be no such creature. It insisted, therefore, that if miracles be real, there is no breach of law. God's activity in a miracle

<sup>2</sup> So Hume, etc. Cf. Professor Tyndall's interpretation: "A miracle is strictly defined as an invasion of the law of the conservation of energy," etc.



is not unconditional, and, being conditioned, it is like all other divine activity, subject to law. Accordingly, if the miraculous event does not conform to the known laws of nature or morality, it is yet in strict conformity with other unknown laws of these two domains. And the transcendence of the supernatural is not a transcendence over all nature and morality, but a transcendence within each of these domains, one law being higher than another. Grace, accordingly, becomes a kind of special providence, the sovereign direction of the processes of nature and morality in the redemption of the world from evil and the realization of human destiny.

If we make an analysis of this conception of the supernatural, for the sake of comparison with the other, we reach this result: (1) There is here again the limitation of creation to the orders of nature and morality. (2) A miracle is a divine act in conformity with some unknown law of one or other of these two domains.<sup>3</sup> (3) The transcendence of the supernatural is therefore, within, not beyond, these orders of creation.<sup>4</sup>

It will be observed that the divine works of grace are miracles to us only because of our ignorance. With the advance of knowledge, the events so designated will be no longer so designated; and the term "supernatural" will become, as to many it already has, a relic of our superstition. All experience is reducible to two orders of being, natural and moral; and any idea of a third realm, transcending these two, is a mere dream.

This must surely, however, be too easy a solution of a definition. The insistence upon law is welcome. We must believe that the reign of law is absolute, and that there is no part of our experience without law. There can be nothing arbitrary about grace, and we must suppose law where none is known. But this skeptical definition may be as dogmatic as the one it opposes. The one

<sup>3</sup>Some will recall the discussion by BADEN POWELL in the once famous *Essays and Reviews*.

<sup>4</sup>The definition of a miracle given by ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE in the interest of Spiritualism belongs to this skeptical type, since the spiritual is only a peculiar activity of the moral intelligences; viz., "any act or event necessarily implying the existence and agency of superhuman intelligences" (*Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p. 5).

may be ignoring truth as much as the other. For what does the sovereignty of grace mean? It is not simply the sovereignty of God over the orders of creation, for that is as true of providence as of redemption; but it is the transcendence of the religious life in its spiritual development over the natural and moral orders of being. We can escape this conclusion only by objecting to the evidence for the alleged facts.<sup>5</sup>

3. We are therefore forced onward to what may be called the *critical* stage of our definition. Since there is no place for the supernatural in any of our popular theories of the universe, it may be that our theories of the universe are inadequate. Dogmatic theology asserted its place beyond the natural and moral orders, but could give no explanation of its position there. A skeptical theology has found a place for it within these orders of being, but forces it into its place by robbing it of its distinction. The one insists on the transcendence, the other insists on the orderliness of the supernatural; and both facts must certainly enter into our definition. A reversion to the problem of the universe must be our criticism of the dogmatism of each position; and such a reversion discovers a theory of the universe which apparently allows a satisfactory definition of the supernatural.

The error of the old dogmatic theology was twofold: (1) the conception of God's relation to the universe as a purely transcendent one; (2) the mechanical conception of creation as complete in the beginning, and therefore limited to the natural and

<sup>5</sup> The great intellectual obstacle to belief in the miraculous has been the conception of a miracle as an arbitrary interpolation in the order of creation. It has been supposed that we must choose between miracles and the reign of law. But if such be the alternative, miracles must go, for they would be irrational events in a rational world, which is a contradiction. It seems strange that the possibility of miracles being strictly in accordance with law, without losing their distinctive character, should have had such a hard fight for recognition. BUSHNELL, among others, has done yeoman service in emphasizing this truth. "To let go of such a faith, or lose it, is to plunge at once into superstition. If any Christian, the most devout, believes in a miracle, or a providence that is done outside of all system and law, he is so far on the way to polytheism. The unity of God always perishes, when the unity of order and law is lost." (*Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 262.) The nearest approach to a breach of law in the world is sin — *ἀνομία* — a violation of law; but if it is rebellion against the higher law, it is subject to the lower laws of life. There is no escape from law.

moral orders. The dogmatism of such a theory of the universe is very apparent, and has long ago received its correction. God is a Spirit, immanent in all things as truly as he is transcendent above all things. The universe is the self-revelation of God, in the evolution of the finite up through all its forms to the highest order of being. Creation is, therefore, a continuous process, ever going forward, never finished, without beginning or end. In this evolution of the universe we are able to discover the three typical orders of being—natural, moral, and spiritual. Since God is a Spirit, the spiritual is the goal of creation or highest type of being; and it transcends the moral, as truly as the moral transcends the physical. This spiritual theory of the universe is, briefly, the solution of the supernatural offered to us by criticism.<sup>6</sup> The supernatural is the spiritual, and it therefore transcends both the natural and the moral orders. There is nothing arbitrary about it, for law reigns in the spiritual realm as absolutely as in the lower spheres of the world's development. It is not a scattered series of isolated events, but an order of life, apparently springing out of the lower orders of life, but rising above them and embracing them in its higher unity. It is the kingdom of God upon the earth.

We are not at present concerned with the defense of this spiritual theory of the universe. We are simply tracing the progress in theological definition of the supernatural; and we have found the highest or most intelligible conception of it in this spiritual theory of the universe. For consider how it interprets the two important results reached by induction, viz., the transcendence of the supernatural over all nature and morality, and the redemption of both nature and morality through its grace.

I. The transcendence of the spiritual over the natural and the moral is the fundamental matter. In the spiritual theory of the universe there are the three orders of being—natural, moral,

<sup>6</sup>The lack of a sharp distinction between the moral and the spiritual seems to the writer the chief defect in most of the recent definitions of the supernatural. So Bushnell. See also PROFESSOR J. H. BERNARD's article in HASTINGS's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. III, where the distinction is, of course, recognized, but no fundamental meaning given to it.

and spiritual. The transcendence of the moral over the natural is a familiar truth, and furnishes the conception of the supernatural of many able writers (*e. g.*, Bushnell). But the transcendence of the spiritual over the moral, and therefore also over the natural, is, according to this theory, an equally demonstrable truth. It is the familiar distinction of morality and religion in their highest developments. Morality is the life of self-consciousness and self-realization. Religion is the life of divine consciousness and service. In morality man seeks a moral ideal that is unattainable in its perfection by the slow, successive steps of human volition. The infinite is beyond the reach of the finite; and the moral life is a constant defeat, though we may rise as often as we fall. In religion, on the other hand, the infinite perfection of life is identified with the God in whom we live and move and have our being. But God is not simply our ideal and the object of our contemplation. God is immanent in all life, as he is transcendent; and by our faith in him, the eternal life of God enters into our own life, lifting us up into the realm of his own spirituality. But this means that the infinite perfection of life is no longer simply a moral ideal; it is a spirit or principle which enters and energizes the life that has faith in God. The infinite ideal has already become a reality, not as our moral perfection, but as a spiritual energy; and the rigid laws of moral progression have been transcended by the grace of God who inhabiteth eternity, yet dwelleth also with him that is of a humble and contrite heart.<sup>7</sup>

The transcendence of the spiritual over the moral is clear, and as the moral transcends the natural, the spiritual must also transcend the natural. But the transcendence of the spiritual over the natural is a different thing from the transcendence of the moral over the natural. It must be different, because the spiritual also transcends the moral. And so a physical miracle is a very different phenomenon from any moral action. It is a spiritual event, in which both the natural and moral orders are transcended. This will be clearer from an illustration. When

<sup>7</sup>See the late PRINCIPAL CAIRD'S fine volume, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. But the classic statement is Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Jesus fed the multitude with five barley loaves and two small fishes, so that twelve baskets of the fragments were left over, what happened? If there had been time and money, the disciples could have multiplied the loaves and fishes to the same extent by the ordinary means, *i. e.*, by a series of moral actions. But Jesus accomplished the matter without the use of any physical means. Such a feat was beyond the power of human will, and beyond the power of Jesus' will, as he often confessed. It was accomplished by faith in God, who worketh all things in all; and God's will, though it be as completely conditioned as man's will, is not limited in its freedom by the organic conditions of the human will. A physical miracle is, therefore, a work of divine grace, transcending both the natural and the moral orders, and by its sovereignty bringing them into the unity of the spiritual.

The same may also be said of moral miracles. Take, for example, the sudden conversion of Jerry Macaulay in New York city, and numberless others. His regeneration is manifested in a radical change of life, *viz.*, a new disposition and purpose of heart. What is the secret of it? Not the power of a man's own will, but contrite faith in the living God. In the surrender of one's life to God, the Spirit of God apparently renews the organic conditions of desire, as well as gives a new direction to the will—a process of renewal that is only begun in regeneration and is continued in sanctification. But the striking thing is that there is a new disposition as well as a new purpose of life.<sup>8</sup> In regeneration, the grace of God transcends the organic order as well as the moral order, and by its sovereignty brings inclination and duty into harmony under the unity of the spiritual.

The transcendence of the spiritual over the natural and the moral is therefore not simply the transcendence of one law over another, but the transcendence of the highest order, in which the lower orders find their unity and fulfilment.

<sup>8</sup>Modern psychology confirms historical theology in its claim that in regeneration the result is not simply a new act of will but a new disposition, since volition in every case supposes desire, and desire supposes sensuous impulse. The new disposition and the new purpose go together.

2. And this fact leads us to consider the second important result of our inductive study, viz., the redemptive character of the supernatural. It is a divine work of grace, in the redemption of the world from evil and realization of its eternal destiny. There are the two aspects of it, the annulment of evil and the realization of good, giving to good and evil their spiritual meanings. But these are simply two aspects of the one spiritual process, or evolution of the kingdom of God on earth.

The existence of evil in the universe offers a tremendous problem; but we need only say that apparently it is inevitable in the evolution of the finite. There is physical evil, or the bondage of the moral, and therefore of the spiritual, to the material. There is moral evil, or the self-assertion of the moral intelligence in opposition to the spiritual. In each case, evil is the frustration of the higher by the lower, or the bondage of the higher to the lower.

The evolution of the spiritual is possible only by the overcoming of both evils; and that means the evolutionary progress cannot be along a straight line. There must be a continual reversion to the more elementary conditions for the sake of rebuilding the more complicated structures of life. And this mode of overcoming evil is the probable explanation of the miraculous, in distinction from the supernatural. The supernatural, as we have seen, means only the transcendence of the spiritual over the natural and moral in the sense already explained. There is nowhere any breach of law; only spiritual law transcends natural and moral law, because the spiritual is the higher unity in which they are embraced and come to their own. But in a miracle there is an apparent breach of law, unless we suppose the presence of law where none is known; and this is what the spiritual theory compels us to do. For, granting the truth of the record, what happened when Jesus at Cana made the water into wine? We can only suppose that in the divine laboratory of the universe the divine will resolved the water into the most elementary condition of matter and recomposed it into the new complexity called wine. The possibility of such a process receives light every day from the late discoveries and hypotheses

of science.<sup>9</sup> What chemistry offers us in its list of elements and their combinations is, after all, only an introduction to the study of the intricate processes continually going on in the divine laboratory of the universe. A similar process we may suppose to have taken place in the healing of diseased tissue. A similar process possibly takes place in the renewal of the sensuous elements of volition in regeneration. And, as a final example, a similar process may possibly explain the resurrection of the dead. But whatever may be the hidden process, this reversion to more elementary conditions for the sake of rebuilding the more complicated structure of life reveals the possibility that each miracle conforms to unknown laws, natural and moral, the discovery of which would remove all mystery from a miracle and show it to be simply a reversion to the simple for the sake of rebuilding the complex. This critical definition of a miracle, therefore, really combines the dogmatic and the skeptical in a higher view, since the transcendence of the supernatural over all nature and morality becomes reconciled with the presence of unknown second causes.<sup>10</sup>

If our interpretation of the spiritual theory of the universe be correct, the place of the miraculous in the universe is fixed and definite. It is the manifestation of the supernatural in the annulment of evil. If there were no evil in the world, there would be no miracle, though the supernatural would appear unchangeably

<sup>9</sup>The reference is especially to the discovery of radium and the renewed speculation about the ultimate constitution of matter.

<sup>10</sup> According to the above definition the old idea of a miracle as an event without the explanatory antecedents, and therefore due to the immediate agency of God, passes away. The real distinction of a miracle is the reversion to simpler conditions for the sake of reconstruction. If there were no evil, such a reversion would not be necessary, evolution of life being an unbroken progress. A miracle, therefore, involves not only the higher law of the spiritual, but other laws of nature and morality governing the more elementary conditions of these realms. By hypothesis, it is a reversion to more elementary laws for the sake of reconstruction.

If we still use the word "immediate" to describe the divine activity in a miracle, in distinction from the divine activity in providence, we must not use the word to denote the absence of certain conditions, but rather the presence of the totality of conditions in the self-activity of spirit. It contrasts the absoluteness of the infinite with the relativity of the finite. STRAUSS's words are at least interesting: "God acts upon the world as a whole, immediately; but on each part, only by means of his action on every other part" (*Life of Jesus*, Vol. I, p. 72, as quoted by Bushnell).

in its sovereignty over nature and morality. And the less evil there is in life, the less of the miraculous there will be in the evolution of the spiritual. Accordingly, in the human development of Jesus' life, where there was physical evil, but no moral evil, there was less of the miraculous than in the life of the redeemed, though, being completely spiritual, it was completely supernatural. There was in his life the crowning miracle of the resurrection, but that is an annulment of physical evil, and promised to all believers. There was no moral miracle in his life,<sup>10</sup> because there was no sin to be taken away, as in the case of the redeemed. It follows also that in the redemption of sinful humanity, the less sin there is in any life, the less of the miraculous there will be, so that in the development of many Christian lives regeneration will be marked by no sudden change, and may be imperceptible to our dull vision.

The place of the miraculous in the universe is so fixed and definite because the place of the supernatural is so fixed and definite. It is but one mode of the manifestation of the supernatural in the spiritual evolution of the universe. And the place of the supernatural in the universe is fixed and definite beyond all disputation, if the universe be spiritual. If God is Spirit, and creation be the evolution of spirit, the sovereignty of the spiritual over the material and the moral, with the involved annulment of evil, is the surest thing in history. In the New Testament terms, it is the kingdom of God on earth, which the Christ came to set up. It is the final stage in the cosmic evolution, and the perfect revelation of the divine reality; and, instead of being the dream of superstition, it is the most real thing in the experience of men.

This correlation of the unity of the universe with its spirituality is the clear doctrine of Christ throughout his teaching. The universe is one because it is spiritual. It is a perfect unity, in which all forms of being are harmoniously and structurally

<sup>10</sup> These words will appear strange to many who constantly declare Jesus' sinless life to be the great moral miracle of history; but the explanation is found in the distinction, drawn above, between the miraculous and the supernatural. We are referring, also, to his own personal development and neglecting his spiritual place in the world as Redeemer.



embraced; and its evolution is an orderly progression from the lowest to the highest. There is no division or chasm or conflict between the orders of being, except the obstruction to the progress of evolution created by sin; and sin is overcome by divine grace in the spiritual redemption of the world. In the evolution of the spiritual there is no more a breach of the principle of continuity than in the evolution of self-conscious intelligence. Miracles are simply the signs of the new order, bursting into view, appearing regularly in the cosmic development. Instead of a disturbance of the unity of the cosmos, the unity of the cosmos now truly appears. For the universe is one because it is spiritual. God is One, because he is Spirit.

In conclusion, let it be remembered that we have been seeking only a definition of the supernatural, the most intelligible one that can be found. The reality of the supernatural is another problem. The problem of its reality demands the utmost scientific and philosophical criticism. There must be scientific criticism of all the available evidence, both on the historical and the psychological lines. There must be searching philosophical criticism of the theory of the universe, both in its conception of God and the evolution of the finite. But a definition is surely one condition of successful criticism. Without it there have been volumes of discussion, as inconclusive as aimless.